



## **SERVICE PLAN AGREEMENT ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

Bright Star Adoptions is a child placement agency licensed by the state of Arizona to provide domestic adoption, international adoption, CORE education, post placement and finalization services. We serve families and children without discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, natural origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status or ethnic origins. We are happy to provide you with a copy of our agency license upon request. A copy of our license is posted in our reception area.

Located in Mesa Arizona, Bright Star Adoptions serves the entire state of Arizona; we can travel to meet with you if you live outside metro areas. We can also network with any out-of-state placement agency that you choose.

## **OUR PROGRAMS FOR WHICH WE ARE APPROVED BY THE STATE**

### **Domestic Adoption**

- Interstate Domestic Infant Adoption
- Special Needs Adoptions
- Kinship & Custodial Adoptions
- Instate Domestic Infant Adoptions
- Instate private domestic adoptions of older children.
- Second parent Adoptions
- Stepparent Adoptions
- Designated Adoptions

## **OUR SERVICES**

- Orientation
- Domestic Certified Home Study/International Certification Home Study
- Adoption preparedness training as required by state regulations
- Referrals for adoption resources as needed
- Post Placement supervision and support
- Explanation of legal procedures assisting in preparing legal documents and attending court with you ( If your adoption is being finalized in the state of Arizona)
- Post Finalization (Report for court)
- Re validation of a foreign decree
- CORE Education
- Creation of your certified report

Additional services are provided, depending on the program through which you are adopting. Please refer to the documentation you have received for your particular program and contact us if you have any questions or need further information.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



## **What fees does Bright Star Adoptions charge? What is covered?**

Our fees are listed on the attached Fee Agreement. The fee Agreement includes detailed explanation of all services provided, incidental fees and additional expenses.

Please remember that the fees you pay are for professional services provided for the agency. THEY ARE NOT PAYMENT FOR A CHILD.

Fees are not refundable except in the cases of services that are not provided. Fees for services not provided will be refunded within sixty (60) days of the time that the adoption case is closed. All refunds must be requested in writing.

## **WHAT IS A CERTIFIED REPORT?**

R-21-5-406 A-D 8-105

A certified report is an actual study of you and your family; the social worker will look into your childhood up to adulthood, your marriages, finances, she/he will also inspect your home for child safety using the Foster Care State Standards, (more topics will be covered as well). This usually takes two (2) separate visits, for about four (4) hours total. 1 visit must take place in your home for at least One (1) hour

## **What is a certified report renewal?**

If after 18 months you have not completed an adoption for any reason, we must renew your certified report to show any changes, i.e. finances have changed, you have moved, or changed jobs that has happened in the past 18 months. If you have completed an adoption and wish to adopt again, we again have to renew your certified report, because the original one no longer reflects your family, as you have a new member.

## **How long is a Certified Report good for?**

A Certified Report is good for 18 months

## **What types of adoptions are there?**

Domestic/Newborn – Birth mothers come to us and we assist her in locating a family for her baby.

Identified or Designated – This is when you as a client come to the agency with your own birth mother.

Kinship – This is when you adopt a family member



International – We have partnerships with outside agencies that have programs in foreign countries.

### **How long does an adoption process take?**

The length of the adoption process depends on the type of adoption you are pursuing and several other variables. The certified report is generally completed within 3 months but can take up to 6 months after the approval of the formal application and receipt of supporting documents. The wait for placement of a child in your home could be almost immediately or can take as long as three years. After placement, there is a mandatory period of post placement supervision by the agency, generally 30 days for infant and international adoptions and up to 18 months for an older child or special needs adoption.

Most domestic adoptions will be finalized within 30 days after the placement of the child. Many international adoptions are finalized in the child's birth country. In these cases, families will be required to validate their adoption in the county courts after they return home. Bright Star Adoptions, LLC advises that validation be completed within one year of a child's arrival date. With some international programs, the adoption are not finalized. In this instance, families will need to finalize when they return home. This usually takes place six-months to one year after arrival in the United States. Please contact Bright Star Adoptions if you need more information about your particular case.

Bright Star Adoptions will provide one (1) Post Placement reports for Arizona and referral, out of state adoptions require more reports and Post Placements and we are happy to do them. All adoptions include counseling information and referral to resources in the community. We will provide information and referral services, counseling, resources, and education classes. Should you wish, you have the right to seek legal counsel to further understand Arizona law.

### **Are Concurrent adoptions allowed?**

Bright Star Adoptions allows families to do a concurrent adoption if it is determined to be in the best interest of the children and all parties involved agree this is the best course of action. This includes the placement agency, the networking agency, and the family. We will also consider and counsel families on how this will impact their initial adoption plan and the timeframe for each adoption.

### **How many children has Bright Star Adoptions place each year?**

Although Bright Star is a new agency, licensed in 2018, our staff has many years of experience in adoption. We have participated in the placement of 5 to 10 children a year, and feel we will do the same now. Bright Star Adoptions annual reports are available in our office.



## **What training is required for adoptive parents?**

Adoption preparation training must be completed prior to the placement of a child. All adoptive families must complete 16 hours of CORE education. This three session core education is required for all applicants regardless of the age of the child or from where you are adopting. International or an older child will require an additional 4 hours.

## **Topics to be covered in the CORE classes are:**

1. Attachment and bonding issues
2. Loss and grief issues, if applicable for all parties to the adoption
3. Adoption as lifelong issues as it pertains to all parties through the adoption.
4. Key concepts of child growth and development.
5. Boundary setting and discipline
6. Parenting a child of a different culture of racial background, infancy through adulthood, if applicable
7. Disclosure issues including the accuracy of family history regarding the child and birthparent(s) family, discussion with the child and sharing information with others
8. Understand adoption law and procedures, including termination of parental rights and the expedited relinquishment process, and administrative notice for presumed birth father.
9. On-going contact and/or communication of child and adoptive family with biological family and/or techniques.
10. Medical and Health issues including, but not limited to: shaken baby syndrome, parental substances abuse, relevant environment issues, and genetic risk factors
11. Expectations of adoptions and adoptive process.
12. Basic care and supervision appropriate to the age of the child.

For families adopting internationally Bright Star Adoptions offers an additional half-day training. This four hour pre placement workshop covers preparation, travel, and the first few weeks home with your child. You are required to complete this class before you travel to pick up your child.

Adoption preparation education is provided in a classroom setting. Reading books and or viewing DVD'S may require a small number of credit hours.

Bright Star Adoptions is available to help you acquire all of the mandated hours and topics for a one-time fee of \$250.00 per couple. This includes class registration rental of videotapes, and DVD's borrowing of books and attendance at small groups.



## **What information will I receive about the child and his or her birth family?**

We will provide you with all information we are legally allowed to share. Non-identifying information, which may be shared prior to placement of a child in your home, includes:

- Physical description of the birth parents
- Educational background and occupation of the birth parents
- Genetic, medical, and social information that is available about the birth family (medical information can only be provided with written birth parents consent)
- The child's medical records and any other evaluations made available
- Placement history if applicable

Families pursuing a domestic infant adoption will complete certified home study interviews (We will discuss), part of the formal application for this program. You have the right to modify your preferences at any time. By Arizona law, the records and papers in relinquishment and adoption proceedings are closed and may be opened for inspection only upon a court order for good cause shown. With a certified investigator the courts and the agency are required to preserve the confidentiality except in the case of a designated or open adoption where the identifying information has been shared. The birth parent will also fill out a contact preference form and medical history statement that they can file with the state registrar including the ability of the birth parents to change the preference form at a later time should they wish to.

## **How does Bright Star Adoptions provide a record storage and maintenance of records if the agency were to close?**

Bright Star Adoptions maintains open case records in locked file cabinets in the agency office. The office manager and the administrator have the keys needed to open the file cabinets. Only those personal needing access to the case records in connection with an adoption are allowed access. The Office of Licensing and Regulations (OLR) may review all records. In accordance with the state of Arizona requires that all files that are closed are scanned into a computer database. This database is in place and retained on the Bright Star Adoptions server. The files are kept for 99 years as a hard file in our office. The documents scanned into the database contain the social and medical information that may be necessary for the adoptive family and child's future needs, they can only be accessed by a Certified Investigator.

Bright Star Adoptions provides to the adoptive parent(s) all NON identifying information about the adoptee's healthy history or background. This information is provided at the time of referral, if the child is born, or after birth if the child is a newborn. All personal data in connection with an adoption is used only for the purposes of adoption. Such data is kept in secure facilities and available only to those persons connected to the adoption.



In the event that the agency closes its business, all scanned adoption records will be transferred to the (OLR) Office of Licensing and Regulations (R21-9-229) we will recommend a licensed child placement agency in Arizona to all families with open active cases. The cases will be distributed to appropriate referred agencies with the approval of each adoptive family on a case-by-case basis. The Offices of Licensing will be notified of any transfers.

### **What could prevent me from being approved to adopt?**

Bright Star Adoptions approves applicants for adoption on the basis of their capacity to understand, accept, and meet the needs of a child. We assess each applicant from the perspective of what would be in the best interest of the child you wish to adopt.

### **You're certified Home Study can be denied if:**

- It is determined that the applicant is not physically or emotionally able to protect nurture, care support or educate a child.
- If the applicant is unable or unwilling to comply with state or federal laws or agency policies and procedures concerning the adoption of a child
- If an applicant has been convicted at any time of a felony in one of the following: child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, any crime against a child, any crime involving violence, rape, sexual assault, or homicide, or any crime, the underlying factual basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence; or violation of a restraining order, physical assault or battery conviction of felony drug-related conviction within the past five years.
- If the applicant has been convicted at any time of a misdemeanor in one of the following areas; child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, any crime against a child, any crime, the underlying factual basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence; violation of a restraining order; or any crime involving violence, rape, or sexual assault.
- If it is discovered that the applicant has withheld information or has made a false statement of any kind in the application or other documents submitted to the agency.
- If it is determined that the applicant's home is not suitable for a child.
- If your psychological evaluation, or medical comes back negative.

If there are other factors of concern that might lead to denial of the application to adopt, these will be presented to you in writing.

### **Does Bright Star Adoptions provide us with all of our services?**

In special circumstances we will coordinate services with another agency, entity or individual. In these cases, we enter into an interagency agreement and/or formal contract



that outlines the scopes of work each party will provide. We also refer out for your psychological evaluation.

### **Who licenses Bright Star Adoptions?**

The offices of Licensing and Regulation (OLR) located at 3003 N Central Avenue Phoenix, Arizona 85012

Phone numbers are: 602-255-2830 or cell at 602-350-5936

### **Validation's of Foreign Adoption Process**

Families that have completed an international adoption which is not finalized in the foreign country, Bright Star Adoptions will begin the validation of foreign decree process in court, once we have collected both the required fees and document.

### **Funds Paid To support the Birth Mother**

Families may assist their birth mother with living expenses, clothing, and one-time expenses. Only pregnancy related expenses may be on behalf of a birth mother directly to a vendor. (i.e. renter, Walmart, Phone Company, gas cards etc.)

### **Clients Rights**

As clients of Bright Star Adoptions and any other adoption agency you have rights. These are as follows:

- You have the right to receive prompt, responsible and courteous service.
- You have the right to be involved in decisions regarding the services you receive
- You have the right to receive services based on your needs to which you have given informed consent.
- You have the right to protection of privacy and confidentiality of all information obtained during the adoption process.
- You have the right to full disclosure of fees prior to contracting with the agency for services.
- You have the right to disclosure by the agency of any actual or perceived conflict of interest on the part of the agency.
- If you are in need of additional services after the completion of your adoption, you have the right to receive reasonable accommodations for your needs.
- You have the right to read and review your file and your family assessment excluding references and other third party information.
- You have the right to seek legal counsel for representation or for further understanding of Arizona Adoptions Laws.



## Client Grievance Process

Clients have the right to express dissatisfaction regarding their treatment by Bright Star Adoptions staff and the quality of services provided without fear of any consequences. Bright Star Adoptions may also benefit from your comments and suggestions, which may help us to improve our services. Anyone having a complaint is encouraged to contact the agency and follow the procedure outlines below:

### STEP 1

The client is encouraged to speak directly with the staff member about whom they have the complaint and attempt to resolve the complaint through discussion. If the client is not satisfied with resolution of the complaint at this level, he or she may ask to speak with the employee's supervisor and attempt to resolve the complaint through discussions.

### STEP 2

If the complaint is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may present the complaint to the administrator and expect written response within ten (10) business days from the date the complaint was received.

### STEP 3

Within thirty days (30) of receipt of the complaint the board will have conducted a hearing, from which it has gathered testimony and other pertinent information on which to base its decision. Once able to reach a majority decision, it will do in writing to the complaint. The decision is final.

For International Adoption involving Hague countries, the complaint may submit a complaint to the Hague Convention of Inter-country Adoptions Complaint Registry. If the complaint is not resolved through Bright Star Adoptions complaint process stated above. To submit you should go to the website [adoptions.state.gov](http://adoptions.state.gov) and click on the complaint form.

## Refund Policy

\*See refund policy attached\*

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|--|----|----------|----|
| <b>Domestic Orientation:</b>   | \$ | Free     |    |
| Application Fee: Due at the time of submitting application, this fee is nonrefundable. |    |          | \$ |
| 500.00   |    |          |    |
| Certified Home Study: DOMESTIC (Due prior to first home study visit.)                  | \$ | 1,400.00 |    |
| Certified Home Study: INTERNATIONAL (Due prior to first home study visit.)             |    |          | \$ |
| 1,700.00   |    |          |    |
| Home Study: Update or Renewal (Due prior to visit.)                                    | \$ | 800.00   |    |
| Home Study: Addendum (Due Prior to visit.)   | \$ | 400.00   |    |





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|---|----|
| Post Placement: Individual visits (Due prior to first visit.)                   | \$ |
| 350.00  |    |
| Adoption CORE Education: Domestic / 16 hours (Due at the time of registration.) | \$ |
| 500.00  |    |
| Finalization of Adoption: (Due prior to completion of documents.)               | \$ |
| 2,500. 00   |    |
| ICPC Document Preparation: To be determined by state                            | \$ |
| 000.00  |    |

Travel - **Excess travel costs:** should the social worker travel more than 20 round-trip miles to provide a service, such as a home visit or to be present at court, a fee of \$1.50 per mile will be charged; this fee includes \$1 per mile for social worker time and .50 per mile for gas and payable in advance of appointments.

## **Programs**

### **Domestic Infant Adoption**

- \$35,000.00 **Agency adoption fee:** Due at the time of signing of contract. This fee includes Birth Parent relinquishment counseling, casework, medical, legal's, and, \$1,000 Birth Mother living expenses. Should her expense go beyond \$1,000.00 approval will be needed from the court, and you will be informed and billed accordingly. All services to locate, and terminate the birth fathers rights, counseling for the birth father should he be apart of the relinquishment process. Processing and approval of application and supporting documents, adoptive parent(s) initial processing and approval of application and supporting documents, adoptive parent(s) initial Interview, birth mother relinquishment counseling, consent, birth parent education, agency placement, pre and post delivery service coordination, administrative costs, non placement birthmother counseling, document preparation, counseling for the birth mother, initial intake and interviews for the birth mother, case worker, birth father counseling, birth parent education social worker for the birth mother, agency placement and pre and post delivery services coordination. Administrative costs, marketing, non-placement birth mother counseling, document preparation, birth mother enrichment program, and birth mother support group. This fee also includes a \$3,000.00 nonrefundable failure fee, should the birth mother change her mind and decide to parent.
- Clients further acknowledge that should they decide not to commit to an adoption plan they will be refunded any funds not earned by the agency, social worker, counselor, and attorneys. Also, any living expense money spent on birth mother is non refundable as well.
- Clients further acknowledge that any partial Agency fees or any other costs incurred shall not be refundable in the event Clients commit to an Adoption Plan but are unable or unwilling to proceed.
- Clients acknowledge that upon completion of an adoption, no detailed accounting of Agency costs and expenses incurred shall be provided and no portion of Agency fee shall be refundable.



- a. Clients acknowledge that not included are adoption Home Study and/or post placement services, reports for finalization of adoption, representation by the Agency at court for adoption hearings, finalization of the adoption or any other expenses including legal services, ICPC fees or other extraneous costs unless specified otherwise. These fees will be billed after placement.

#### **International Adoption Assistance**

Bright Star Adoptions has partnerships with International Hague Agencies and can complete Certified Home Studies, Hague Approved Education, ICPC Approval of Certified Home Study, USCIS Assistance; Post placement visits after Child's arrival home, and re validation of foreign decree.

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|---|-------------|
| <b>International Orientation:</b>   | \$ 000.00   |
| Certified Home Study: INTERNATIONAL (Due prior to first home study visit.)          | \$ 1,700.00 |
| ICPC Approval for International Certified Home Study                                | \$ 400.00   |
| Adoption CORE Education: International / 24 hours (Due at the time of registration) | \$ 750.00   |
| Validation of Foreign Decree: (Due prior to completion of documents.)               | \$ 1,000.00 |

#### **Additional/Incidental Fees**

Additional/Incidental fees may be invoiced to you, as needed.

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| DPS/FBI Clearances | \$ 22.00 per adult |
| Clearances         | \$                 |

#### **Payment**

There is a \$25.00 charge for each dishonored or returned check or payment made by adopting parents to Bright Star Adoptions. We accept Credit Cards, Certified Check, Bank transfers, or other payments arranged

#### **Terms of Payment**

##### **ALL FEES ARE DUE AND PAYABLE WITHIN TEN (10) DAYS OF BILLING**

Birth mother contract fees are due in total upon signing of the contract. No document will receive final signatures without full payment.

I (we) understand the terms of the service plan agreement for adoptive parents.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

